5 sheets

WAS THE HANGING OF RIEL JUSTIFIABLE?

In the early day prohibition maintained in the territories. This was partly on account of the Indians. Whiskey runners begun coming in from Montana. And the Cypress Hills was a good landmark. A bunch was making their headquarters there. Thirty lodges of indians came up from the east. And the bootleggers massacreed the entire band. The mutilation of all the corpses was too horrible to be spoken.

The Governor reported to Ottawa and immediately the mounted police were created and took over. They were always the friends of the Indians. They established Fort Walsh in the hills.

After the annihilation of General Custer's force by Sitting Bull, on the Little Big Horn, an American army chased the Soux to the International Line near where Wild Horse is now located. And t the wily chief claimed sanctuary from the British Crown. Major Walsh was sent to the scene. With one batman he went into that horde of indians in their war paint, interviewed the chief, arranged the treaty and safe conduct. The American army was none to well pleased at the turn of the wheel. They sought revenge and as soon as it was within their hand Major Walsh appeared. But good sports that they were they gave him their blessing and wished him God Speed. Both for courage and for diplomacy this is regarded as the outstanding event in the history of the Mounties.

There was continual rumbling and dissatisfaction between the halfbreeds and the whites in which religion loomed large. It was an anomalous thing to christianise the indians and breeds and then use that as a bone of contention. But when we get mad we loose our reason.

There were few settlements. The provinces were not established. Very little railway line existed. One or two steamboats were on the Saskatchewan. Hospitals were nonexistemt, and few doctors west of Fort Garry. Oh yes, Winnipeg was now on the map.The odd Hudsons Bay post and an occasional missionary , some trappers and the now and then bad man about completes the picture.The newly organised R.N.W.M.P.were thinly scattered.

One of the most fiendish things in history was enacted with-in the present boundaries of Alberta. Before the arrival of the police, bootleggers held forth in the Cypress Hills. For a time the indians there assembled were too heavy for the ruffians . A white went south to where smallpox was epidemic, gathered a bail of clothing gathered off the smallpox corpses, brought it to the Hills , and dumped it where the indians would get it . They were exterminated . However , the Great White Mother(Queen Victoria) and Major Walsh,showered blessings on the Red Men till a proper vision of the whites appeared, at first dimly,, but rapidly growing to the brightness of midday. The Metis did not share this in equal measure with their halfbrothers; so they thought.

The other end of the rope was anchored firmly in the faraway east. Ontario, then as now , was the dominant and dominating head of Canada. And who were these Ontario people? At that time they were mostly all of British extraction. Many came from the U.S.A. and were , with their children and grand children and great grand children, U.E.Loyalists. Sixty three years before this rebellion, An American force had

invaded Canada and established themselves on Queenston Heights on this side of Niagar a River. General Brock, with some quickly gathered volunteers, chiefly farmers, from York, now Toronto went against them . Behind the enemy was a hundred and fifty foot precipice and the river boiling and tumbling along. General Brock's approach was as high , and nearly as steep. Half the way up the hill he fell mortally wounded. His last words were " Push on brave York volunteers" . They did. And those raging furies charged. All they did not kill they"pushed" into the river.

These people were the progenitors of the Ontario of that day.And the spirit of Brock and of the U. E.Loyalists lived and grew in their succeeding generations. There was a fiery colonel , a prominent figure in Toronto, who was an able and a willing speaker,and who was at home as chairman of a citizens meeting. In my college days he was in his prime. And in his address the doughty colonel would exhort the rising generationto the greatest heights of patriotism and climax his every harangue by "And now citizens, when the great American eagle swoops down upon us let each one of us arise in his majesty and pluck a feather from his wing and send him back a very much dishevelled bird across the line." And he would then sink down from exhaustion and in the most deafening applause and begin to prepare his next address.

We knew little about the situation in the West. No railroad connected us therewith. The North shore had been too

rocky and rough for the engineers. Why, it is only recently we were able, by a quite circuitous route , to establish a motor trail. Telephones were nonexistent. Commerce used the trail through the U.S.A. Nothing of a military nature could. In the summer the waters were open. But in winter there was quite a stretch where we had to walk or use horses,and this in snow and thirty below , damp and chilling. Beyond this we had ////// established settlements. Few people in Ontario but had a friend, a neighbor, a father,son, brother, husband , or was it a lover? A sister , mother , daughter or sweetheart? A thousand miles beyond a sheltering gun: In vast stretches the indian reigned supreme; and as many of their halfbrothers. Winter was upon us and the rebellion broke.

This was the situation when an indian and halfbreed rebellion was broadcast in Ontario. And this the soil on which it fell.The horror was indescribable. The older ones had visions of scalping forays. And the field was perfect therefor. And we could not make speed in the advance to their aid. Many soldiers were frostbitten negotiating the North Shore gap in the steel. Our Highschool class, to a man, went into military training. Reports filtered through that the indians were yet on their reserves. But the fear was not allayed. They were poised and when and where would they strike? Could we get there soon enough? Many feared that if a hundred indians went on the warpath that a thousand scalps of our friends would dangle from their belts.

WAS THE HANGING OF REIL JUSTIFIABLE?

For the most part the Indians remained loyal. Archy , of the famous Dionne family, tells me that though he was too sm small to understand the trouble at Frog Lake, yet, his father assured him that the chief tried to hold his people, but that a junior chief, a firebrand, led some young bucks and slaughtered the eight whites whose graves are seen there. This was the only revolt of the Alberta indians. The only man to escape was prominent in the Hudson's Bay post whom two squaws hid under blankets and sat thereon till he sneaked out after dark. And Isador Montour , of Jay Dot, says that not quite all the breeds were rebels. In the raid on one post his father got two white women out and under cover and stood guard before te them and held off that drunken hord with death staring him in the face each minute till the police came.

This picture must form the foundation of any criticism of the governmental action at that time. It would only befog our efforts if we started from our present picture of wealth, communications, population to whom a crossblood is an oddity, an indian chief launching a Victory Loan campaign because no other could be as forceful, Indian boys winning decorations in that holocaust called Europe: Canada has had three outstanding and profoundly constitutional premiers, MacDonald, Laurier, King. Riel must get a fair trial. He got it. Who are we in this inconceivably altered environment to question that Judgement?

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1650 words